

March 15, 2022

Dear Members of the Capital Subcommittee:

We, the undersigned, are parent and teacher representatives to the Brookline Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Taskforce, a coalition of parents and teachers working with town personnel (Transportation, School Committee, Public Health, PSB, BPD, ODICR) and in partnership with the MA SRTS program, to identify and address safety issues in the vicinity of Brookline schools and promote walking/biking/rolling/busing to school to improve health, ease congestion, and reduce CO2 emissions.

Since 2019, our group has identified more than 38 safety issues around our public schools, such as cars speeding in school zones, poor signage, dangerous crossings at intersections, lack of crosswalks, dangerous school arrival and dismissal patterns, and lack of protected bike lanes among others. Thanks to the hard work of the Transportation Division, some of these issues are in the process of being remedied, such as in the case of the Beverly Rd traffic calming effort at the Baker School (included in the present budget request) and the improvements of crosswalks and addition of bike lanes at the Lincoln School (funded via a DOT SRTS infrastructure grant, one of the opportunities made possible by the town's participation in the MA DOT SRTS program).

Our list is long and the need is great. With a staff of only 3 and a budget that has been frozen for the last 10 years, however, the Transportation Division is unable to keep up with all the SRTS requests and to correct the many dangerous situations that our students and their families encounter every day on their way to school. The recent killing of one pedestrian just steps from Driscoll School, and the serious injuring of another, each struck by a motor vehicle while walking in a crosswalk, have further highlighted the need for Brookline to move beyond simply being reactive and become more proactive in creating safe streets, enabling independent movement of our most vulnerable community members, and encouraging the use of sustainable transportation.

In order to meet these growing and urgent needs, the Transportation Division has made very reasonable and necessary budget requests. Among others, these include funds for traffic calming, safety improvements, and bicycle accommodations, but also funds to pilot new road configurations and expand its staff to include a Sustainable Transportation Engineer or Planner. The latter request was called for by Town Meeting in a 2019 Warrant Article, but remains unfulfilled.

We unanimously and strongly urge you to support the full budget that the Transportation Division has proposed to the Capital Subcommittee so that the Town can work in a proactive fashion towards making our streets safer for walking, biking, and rolling to school, and for our community as a whole.

Thank you for your consideration,

Parent/Teacher Representatives to the Brookline Safe Routes to School Task Force:

Gareth Lawson (SRTS Co-chair, Baker School), Rebeca Salguero Palacios (SRTS Co-chair, Pierce School), Christi Electris (SRTS Co-chair, Pierce School), Melissa Gallin (Driscoll School), Perry Grossman (Lincoln School and BHS), Wendy Friedman (Lincoln and BHS, Member of the Transportation Board), Marcia Ramos Sosa (Lawrence School, METCO), Joshua Dupuy (Runkle School), Kerri Ann Tester (Pedestrian Advisory Committee Liaison and Pierce School /BHS), Eli Silk (Heath School), Alex Eisen-Cuadra (Driscoll School), Leonard Wholey (Driscoll School, Member of the Transportation Board), Tha Chan (Florida Ruffin Ridley), Bob Miller (Heath School).